



The Lions Roar



INDEPENDENCE

July 2007

WSSB Students Participate in the Rod Rally

By Adrienne Stout, Recreation/Volunteer Coordinator

On June 7, 2007 the Washington State School for the Blind hosted a Rod Rally that included 36 classic and hot rod cars, and over 90 participants. Residential, day and outreach students participated by directing their drivers on a route that took them to our neighborhood Burgerville for a milkshake. The students used directions in braille and large print and some also used a GPS navigation system to lead the way!



Student Nathan with driver Craig LaCross



LIFTT student Chris with driver Chuck Mulligan

After the drive was complete, students and drivers returned to the school for a barbecue (the hamburgers were donated by Tom Mears, owner of Burgerville). After the barbecue the students and drivers built a craft project by molding clay into the shape of the car they rode in. Parents and staff also joined in the fun by riding with students. Everyone had a wonderful time.



Student Billy with Mark Matthias



Student Tyler with Steve Runyan

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Sensory Safari visits WSSB

By Thom Halligan, Director, SCI Northwest Chapter

On May 17, 2007, the Northwest Chapter of Safari Club International hosted it's 6th annual Sensory Safari in cooperation with the Washington State School for the Blind. Students from three states gathered on the campus to participate in track and field events as well as experience a "touch" of the wild. Hosted by Chapter/Board of Director member Bill Harrison, with the support of several additional members from the northwest, the function was nothing less then a total success. Lines of tables, covered with a hundred or more wildlife specimens (donated by both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife service and donors from the Northwest Chapter and our very supportive membership from Vancouver) were available to all that wished to visit. From anteaters to zebras, the variety gave a real "hands on" tactile treat for all!



Preschool student Olivia explores the displays

Another highly successful contribution was the Sensory Safari braille bracelets available from Tucson. With the help of Barbara Sheldon, Washington School for the Blind Foundation's Executive Director and Thom Halligan from the Safari Club International (SCI) Northwest Chapter, 350 blue bracelets were handed out. Several students were asked to demonstrate their ability to read braille and all did so flawlessly. Thom is now known as the "SCI bracelet guy".

WSSB Partners with iQ Credit Union to install Clark County's first accessible ATM

By Janet Merz, Executive Assistant

WSSB and iQ Credit Union have joined forces to install an accessible ATM with voice guidance features on the school's campus. This is the first accessible ATM to be placed in a school district in Clark County.

"What a great day this is for students at WSSB to be able to have this independent experience thanks to iQ Credit Union," said Dr. Dean Stenehjelm, WSSB Superintendent. "I hope that this accessible ATM can serve as an example so that many more of these types of ATMs can appear throughout our community."

"We're always looking for better ways of serving all of our members, no matter what their special circumstances might be," said Roger Michaelis, iQ Credit Union CEO. "This was our first experience with installing and using a voice guidance ATM. The manufacturer, Diebold, Inc., has worked closely with the National Federation of the Blind to improve the accessibility features of these machines. We're pleased to help students at the school have access to more systems and equipment that enhance their independence."

The ATM will be accessible both for students and for all organizations that lease space on the campus including City of Vancouver Police Department, Educational Service District 112, Southwest Washington Child Care Consortium, and the Department of Services for the Blind. In addition, a number of public agencies and community groups bring approximately 50,000 people to use the campus facilities each year that will enjoy this added convenience.

The ATM installed at WSSB uses both braille and voice guidance to assist users with the machine.



Video Clips on Blindness Tips

White Cane Technique

A recent addition to our Video Clips on Blindness Tips is up and ready for viewing. This year we focused on the theme of Orientation and Mobility – how do our students learn to move around. We started this series with Sighted Guide Technique, now we have added White Cane Technique. Follow Doug Trimble and our student Tyler as they walk around the street, find a bus and cross at intersections. We hope these videos offer the public a better understanding of how independent our students can become when taught these techniques and that parents can further aid the independence of their child by seeing and practicing these skills together.

Please visit our website at: <http://www.wssb.wa.gov/video.asp>.

WSSB Tandem Bike Program

By Steve Rosvold, WSSB Volunteer

We safely completed the last Thursday ride of the season a few days ago. 11 stokers and 10 captains made the trek past the waterfront, through downtown Vancouver and to Fruit Valley Park for refreshments. We enjoyed the cool shade of the Discovery Trail on the way back.

We rode on 8 dates this spring - taking 68 tandem trips. Our gap between the number of stokers signing up to ride and the number of captains available to pilot a tandem grew to nearly 5 – even with the best captain turnout of any season. This results in some stokers riding in the support van for half of our ride. If you have friends, family or co-workers who would enjoy joining us on future rides have them contact WSSB's Volunteer/Recreation Coordinator, Adrienne Stout at adrienne.stout@wssb.wa.gov.

Special thanks to Corey Summers. Corey is an unselfish young man who captained at all 8 of our rides this spring. Also to Dennis Funk for looking after the bikes, keeping them “ride ready” so our captain/stoker teams only have to worry about pedaling. To Allen Kraft and Mary Zamani, Presidents of North River Racing and the Vancouver Bicycle Club, respectively. Both organizations contribute the time, talents and resources of their members to make our rides possible. To our student stokers – the group of young people who each week teach us so much about what is important in life.

Although our Thursday rides are over, we will still have some opportunities to connect over the summer:

1. July 15: WSSB Summer Sports Camp from 3:00-5:30 pm.
2. July 29: North River Racing's Courthouse Crit: We'll feature a ride with some of our student stokers and captains to kick off the racing in downtown Vancouver at 2:00 pm

Rich, Tim, Larry, Clay K, Pam, Eric, Ruth Micaela, Phil, Clay S, Tom, Chuck, Corey, Suzie and Fabian - **THANK YOU.** We also appreciate the interest and support from all of you and look forward to having the opportunity to join you on a WSSB Tandem event in the near future.

Education

By Craig Meador, Director On-Campus Programs



Year's End. It was a whirlwind of a year. It hardly seems possible that the year is over. We had a very active spring with quite a few highlights this year.

The Northwest Environmental Science Camp. This year we had 40 students attend this four day event at Camp Magruder, on the Oregon Coast. The focus this year was on metamorphosis. Students were split into groups that focused on different insects and animals that go through dramatic changes. We received a traditional coastal blessing this year as gray skies and heavy rains were prevalent. It did not dampen the spirits of students as they eagerly tackled every outdoor opportunity. The staff, led by Paul Baldwin, put together another fantastic program. The value of an outdoor education experience is beyond measuring. It is amazing to see students rise to new challenges as they are placed in new surroundings and removed from their usual comfort zones.

WSSB-Lions Annual Track Meet. Over 120 participants from Oregon, Washington and Idaho converged on WSSB this past May 17 to participate in the annual track meet. Volunteers from the Lions Club, Columbia Credit Union, and Henkel Middle School from White Salmon, Washington provided support and encouragement for athletes. It was an excellent day. A special thanks to Jennifer Butcher and her track meet staff for a well organized event.

All School Picnic and Awards Assembly: Parents, students, staff and friends gathered on June 14 to celebrate a great year at WSSB. Awards were presented in many categories that ranged the full gamut of activities at WSSB. Honor Roll and Principal Award winners were recognized and the winners of the Academic Awards were announced.

Middle School Honor Roll: Sunny Aparece, Sarah Bair, Katelyn Claflin, Jacquelyn Patching, Markus Rheinhardt, Kaylee Riley, Anthony Thomas, and Kelsey Wedemeyer.

High School Honor Roll: Chelsea Armstrong, Alyssa West, Vaughn Brown, Jacob Hendee, Arlando Hicks, Fred Ramirez, Rachel Talley, and Tiffany Wilson.

Principal's Award: Jeff Barnes, Rueben Castenada, and Katherine Sokolowsky.

Academic Scholarship Winners:

Gold: Alyssa West

Silver: Chelsea Armstrong

Bronze: Vaughn Brown

Elementary Awards: Most Improved Student: Justin Naramor and Good Student Award: Karley Patching.

Preschool Graduates: We honored two preschoolers that are moving onto kindergarten in their local public schools. Congratulations to Aleeza Albinana and Austin Roberts.

Graduation: "Swingin' on to Bigger Things" was the theme of this year's graduation. Our commencement speaker was Dr. Phil Hatlen. Dr Hatlen is the recently retired Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. He has worked in the field for over fifty years is highly respected as a leading voice in education for the blind. He gave a very heartfelt talk directed to our students encouraging them on to a great life. He reminded them of their passions and the skills that they have and assured them that they are ready for the next big thing.

Seven graduates walked the stage this year. They are: Chelsea Armstrong, Bremerton; Vaughn Brown, Vancouver; Gabrielle McKenna, Everett; Fred Ramirez, Mount Vernon; Alyssa Marian West, Vancouver; Nick Wilks, Puyallup; and Tiffany Wilson, Sedro Wooley.

We hope that all of you enjoy a relaxing summer. We look forward to seeing everyone back next fall recharged and ready to learn. It will be a great year!

OUTREACH SERVICES

By Dee Amundsen, Director of Outreach

The Outreach Department officially began in 1990 with the first contractual arrangement with a local school district for a part-time vision teacher to provide on-going vision services in the public school setting. Prior to this, WSSB always provided consultative services as requested by local districts. But, in 1990 this process was formalized and our work in public schools around the state became the foundation of the Outreach Department. In August 1993, through a collaborative effort between the Department of Printing and WSSB, the Braille Access Center (BAC) was created, providing Braille on a fee for service basis. Shortly after the BAC opened its doors, a Braille transcription program was started at the Washington Correction Center for Women. We currently have 10 offenders and all but our newest offender have Library of Congress certification and several of the women are also Nemeth certified transcribers. In 1996, WSSB and the Outreach Department became the depository for materials for visually impaired and blind children statewide (Instructional Resource Center-IRC). The Lions Low Vision Clinic is also part of Outreach.

Itinerant Vision Services: We will begin the 2007-2008 school year with 39 districts contracting for Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) services and 23 districts contracting for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services. We have one full-time para-educator/transcriber, 7 full-time teachers (3 of which are dual-certified) and 2 part-time teachers, both of whom are dual-certified. Although we continue to add more teachers, the trend seems to be that we are not significantly increasing the number of districts we serve, but are providing districts with more and more service. This speaks to the quality of services and clear perceived benefits from the districts' perspective.

Lions Low Vision Clinic: The clinic is located at WSSB and provides low vision care to anyone, of any age, who is already diagnosed as visually impaired. The clinic does not provide primary care but rather specializes in ascertaining how low vision aids (optical and non-optical) can help a person optimize their vision. The clinic is open two days a week and takes two appointments each day. There is no charge for this service, although any low vision aid prescribed would be purchased by the patient. This year the Lions Low Vision Clinic provided services to 80 individuals.

IRC: The IRC serves about 1,300 students statewide. The school district the student attends registers the student with the IRC through an on-line process. So far this year, the IRC has shipped 4,599 accessible media items, which is an increase of over 594 items over last year. The addition of a full-time office assistant to work with the proofreader, produce large print and assist the manager has played a significant role in maintaining quick, quality services. All WASL's were transcribed and shipped to districts on time.

BAC: The Legislature funded the Braille Access Center's decision package to expand the Braille program at the women's prison. Space at WCCW is very limited and finding appropriate space is a prerequisite to expanding the Braille program. We are working with the Department of Corrections to discuss space limitations and solutions. The BAC continues to have transcription requests from in-state and out-of-state. As orders come into the IRC for braille books, the summer transcription load has become too large for the inmates to handle, so the BAC will contract with one former inmate and at least 4 other transcribers to meet the demand. The BAC is in the midst of transcribing 51 textbooks, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of them are math.

Washington School for the Blind Foundation

By Barbara Sheldon, Executive Director



WSBF

Washington School for the Blind
Foundation

Helping Washington's Blind Youth Achieve Success

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Barbara Sheldon, the new Executive Director of the Washington School for the Blind Foundation (WSBF). My career with WSBF started on April 1, 2007 and it has been an exciting three months.

The students here at WSSB have kept me busy with their stories, smiles and showing off the technology they have received through the Foundation. This technology also enhances student's independence by helping to equalize information access.

The students in Hall Cottage invited me to a tea to celebrate a special volunteer by the name of Bev. You could see in their faces the admiration they have for Bev who comes to read to them each week. Bev brought me to tears as she talked about "her kids" in Hall Cottage, and how much they meant to her. She was not sure how she was going to make it through the summer break without them.



Barbara Sheldon

During my visit at Hall Cottage, several students demonstrated all the Daily Living Skills they are learning as a part of the residential living skills program. Each student's program is geared to fit their current level of independence while pushing continual growth in independence. Wow...what fun it is to see the pride in each student's growth.

WSBF has also been busy partnering with Adrienne Stout, WSSB's Volunteer/Recreation Coordinator and all the community volunteers to put on the Annual Rod Rally. We are also working with the Safari Club International for the upcoming Sensory Safari exhibit here on campus. This exhibit will be a one-of-a-kind, state of the art sensory animal display that will teach about animals from around the world. The school hopes the Sensory Safari will be open by the spring of 2008.

Another partnership has been with Don Donaldson. Don, who as a young boy attended WSSB, went on to become an educator, and wrote his life story at the age of 92. Proceeds from his book, "WHAT'S IN A NAME" directly go to the Foundation to help meet students needs.

The Foundation held its 3rd Annual "Feel the Music, Empower a Life" fundraising event on June 24, 2007. It was a huge success. All donations through this event will be used to support WSBF objectives in providing tools, skills and Assistive Technology to students. Our main sponsors were Beaches Restaurant-Mark Mathias, The Bank of Clark County, Ralph & Susan Gilbert, Donald & Joann Ruffini, Ray Hickey, and the Red Lion at the Quay.



Doug Smith and former student Nick Baker

Our music this year was Grammy award winner acoustic guitarist Doug Smith, who was joined by Three Together. Nick Baker, a former WSSB student, on the piano, while Doug Smith on the acoustic guitar played in perfect harmony the song Renewal. Vaughn Brown, a WSSB student showed off his talents by playing a few songs on the drums with the group Three Together.

This coming year is going to be very exciting for this Foundation and I look forward to working with everyone. If you would like to contact me, please call (360) 696-6321 ext 176, or write me at: 2214 E 13th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661 (barbara.sheldon@wsbf1.org).

Update from the Superintendent's Office

By Dean O. Stenehjem, Ed.D., Superintendent

As you have read through the newsletter, one factor that will continually stand out about WSSB is the numerous partners that help good things happen for students. As we continue to seek information from stakeholders as to how we could continue to improve programs, partners have always been a key in bringing forward new initiatives.

Accessible aids and appliance store: For years WSSB has thought about opening a store that could handle a wide variety of aids and appliances for not only students, but also the community. On October 15, 2007 WSSB's accessible products store will open on the campus. Thanks to the efforts of numerous volunteers, staff, and input from the community the school will be operating a student run store through the ASB (Associated Student Body) functions. This store will be located on the 2nd floor of the Old Main Building and will handle a variety of items that both blind and low vision students and adults often have difficulty locating. The store will also handle school pride items (t-shirts, sweatshirts, caps, etc.). The goal of this store is two fold: Provide a service to students and the community and provide one additional training opportunity for students in the retail business. At this time a determination on hours has not yet been made, but it is the goal of the school to have the hours published by next fall along with the ability to review inventory and place orders on-line. A collection of many appliances will be available on-site so students, family members and the community can explore before ordering. The store will be staffed by students and volunteers with staff oversight.

Sensory Safari: For six years the Northwest Chapter of Safari Club International and the Dept. of Fish and Wildlife have sponsored an annual Sensory Safari on the campus of WSSB. The dream of Judge Bill Harrison, Safari Club contact, members of the Safari Club and WSSB has been to have a permanent Sensory Safari on campus. In the basement of the Old Main Building a 30 x 70 foot room has been made available for the establishment of this facility. All the basic prep work has been completed including painting, spot lighting, carpet, special tables to hold various mounts, etc. An eight by thirty foot African scene mural has been commissioned that will lead individuals into this special place. Artist and former student Nov Gnik will be painting this mural which will be completed by September, 2007. At the same time Safari Club is raising funds and securing a wide range of animals that will be used for this sensory museum for the students and public. The goal is to have a first class facility completed during this upcoming school year with the dedication occurring sometime in the spring of 2008. We see this partnership as wonderful for the students to be able to feel what various animals are like and at the same time provide one more link with the community to learn more about blindness and visual impairment. You never know we might just have a night in the museum (sensory safari) for the community under the sleep shade!

Dry Building (Arts and Crafts Building): In 1963 a young teacher by the name of Ned Olson came to WSSB to teach Industrial Arts. Classes were conducted in a building that was built in 1917, which one time served as the Piano Tuning Building. Ned provided 32 years of wonderful service to blind and visually impaired students from throughout our state. Ned told me a few weeks ago while he was visiting the campus that when he started in 1963 he was told the building was to be remodeled. Many modifications to the facility were made over the years, but most of these were done by Ned and staff on campus to provide a better environment for the classes that Ned and others were teaching. For the past six months work on the Dry building has been underway which will result in wonderful historic preservation for this building that is on the National Historic Register; at the same time bringing this building up to current standards and turning it into a great classroom space for future vocational, technical and craft type classes. WSSB has not had an active Industrial Arts Program for years, but we would like to once again provide students the opportunity to gain these needed skills. The facility is scheduled to open this summer and be ready for classes the fall of 2007.

Continue to check out WSSB's website for continual updates on what is happening at WSSB. Also, check out the live webcam and take a little tour of the campus.

Distance/Digital Learning Update

By Sherry Hahn, Digital Learning Coordinator

Video Conferencing provides Staff Training: We held another successful training in Abacus. WSSB teacher Lisa Hodge offered to teach this wonderful class on the use of Abacus to teach compensatory skills for math instruction (a method developed by Lisa). The evaluations have started coming in and looks like another resounding success: "I sure did enjoy the class. Thanks." "Lisa did a great job presenting the material. She was always willing to answer questions even if it meant staying after class." Every survey indicated that an Abacus II class is wanted. Lisa will be looking at offering this class in the winter term. An exciting addition to this video conferenced class was the addition of six participants in Denver Colorado. Great job Lisa!

On-Line Learning for Students: This coming fall we will continue offering on-line classes to our students. Two students have requested a class so far, one will be investigating the Holocaust. She will examine events and ideas that contributed to the Holocaust, such as the history of Anti-Semitism in Europe and the rise of Hitler in Germany. She will study propaganda and the role it plays in creating government regimes, such as the Nazi Regime. She will engage with many fundamental questions about human nature and why such a thing could occur.

Web design is still a popular subject with our students and once again we will have a student taking advantage of this learning opportunity. This class will focus on learning the basic language of the World Wide Web, which is HTML. HTML or Hyper Text Markup Language is simple coding which is decoded by a browser such as Internet Explorer or Netscape and displayed in a graphical manner.

Assistive Technology Summit: This summer Bruce McClanahan will be offering a four day training – The Assistive Technology Summit in August. Training covers the fundamentals of JAWS (speech recognition software), Magic (screen enhancement software), Duxbury (text to Braille conversion software) and BrailleNote. The BrailleNote gives blind students access to word processing, wireless network connections, media player for listening to books and music, web surfing, e-mail access and much more.

Residential Life

By Renee Corso, Associate Principal for After School and Evening Programs



Transitions Ahead:

Fall 2007 will bring two noteworthy transitions our way. "Nurse Sarah" Buttrell will begin a year-long stay in China working at the Bethel Foster Home and School in Lang Fang, near Beijing. We are looking forward to connecting with her over the months ahead to share in her adventures. "Nurse Lorraine" Delahoyde will begin her first year of retirement after her many years of dedicated service at WSSB. She has graciously offered to return as an intermittent nurse after she gets back from a couple of well-deserved trips over summer and early fall. We will miss both of them tremendously!

Update on Student Growth in Daily Living Skills:

As you may recall, during 2003-2004, we began collecting data to establish a baseline of student performance and growth in the area of Daily Living Skills. Students were assessed in Fall and again in Spring on demonstrated competency levels for the array of developmentally appropriate skills identified on the school's DLS checklists. We have followed a similar assessment format each year to determine annual student growth in DLS. Results are very encouraging, showing significant student progress, with an average annual growth rate of 1.95% over the past three years of data collection. Kudos to everyone who works with our students on developing these important skills!

Change in Administration planned for the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library

By Cathy Turk, Transition Coordinator for the Washington State Library

The Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) is a public library for Washingtonians who cannot read conventional books due to blindness or a learning or physical disability.

Administration and operation of the WTBBL will transfer to the Washington State Library (WSL) effective July 1, 2008. The WSL is a division of Washington's Office of the Secretary of State. This coming year (July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008) reflects the final year of administration of the WTBBL by The Seattle Public Library (SPL) and the beginnings of the "handoff" to the WSL. Over the coming year, the WSL will be more involved in making key decisions about library programs, services and budget issues, with the transition completed by July 1, 2008. State law gives the WSL the legal responsibility for the program; however, the State has fulfilled this responsibility for operating the WTBBL by contracting with The SPL since 1975.

The Office of the Secretary of State's (OSOS) decision to assume direct responsibility for administration and operation of the WTBBL follows several years of discussion between WSL and SPL and two independent studies. In the end, OSOS's decision considered the long term benefit to the program and the patrons, program stability, financial sustainability and extensive input received from the organized consumer groups representing blind and visually impaired individuals in Washington State.

The WSL, SPL and the City of Seattle are committed to working together to facilitate a smooth and hopefully seamless transition, with minimal disruption to library services and patrons. The WTBBL will remain in its current location. However, there remains a very real shortfall between the current program costs and the amount of funding made available through the State. The OSOS will continue to work with the State Legislature and request additional funds to maintain current services. In the meantime, the two agencies, with input from the advisory groups, will need to evaluate options for operating the library within available funding levels during this transition year and beyond. In addition, a survey of a sampling of library patrons will be conducted over the coming year to help determine what services are most important to them in the event that service reductions or modifications need to be made.

To assist WSL in the transition, a Transition Advisory Board (TAB) was established in 2006. Dr. Dean Stenehjem, Superintendent of the Washington State School for the Blind, participates on the TAB as well as several other representatives from the patron community, interested agencies and stakeholder groups. The TAB will continue to advise WSL steps needed to ensure a successful transition, including input on how to address the funding shortfall.

Questions or comments about the planned transition can be directed to Cathy Turk, Transition Coordinator for the Washington State Library, at cturk@secstate.wa.gov.



REMEMBERING WHEN

By James Eccles, President, Former Students Association

Just yesterday, I had the good fortune to have lunch with former principal, Don Donaldson, who is still called "Mr. Donaldson," by the servers at his elegant retirement-center home during lunch.

At age 96, Don is living proof of that old adage, "the past is prologue." With deft ease and grace, he relates current events to past episodes.

The one most interesting episode he related was how, circa 1945, the school's alumni were officially told, by the (then) superintendent, herself, that they were not welcome on the school campus, neither individually, nor collectively, in alumni association.

With still-fresh passion, Don related how, for the next eight years, alumni association meetings were quixotic affairs, traveling from city to city throughout Washington state, held at various hotels. They even met in Vancouver for one such gathering--but not at the school, itself.

Our luck, as alumni, has vastly improved since then, for not only are all our conventions routinely held at the school, itself, whether every two years or, as in more recent times, every five; but school administration, faculty and staff, also routinely, assist as volunteers at our conventions.

Sometimes, it is good to get informed on how things were in the past, so one can be more aware of one's good fortune to be located firmly in a more harmonious present.

And, hey, did you know that, according to Don, himself a student at our school before regaining his sight as an adult, Robert (Sparky) Sherman, long-time, sixties-era music instructor at the school, himself, according to Mr. Donaldson, only played the cello, in his formative years. All the other instruments he played (piano, trumpet, clarinet, . . .) he learned as an adult. Now I, myself, did not know that. This history stuff surely is interesting, eh, containing unanticipated twists and turns that one would not have imagined possible.

I hope that it will be possible for many, many alumni, including some from among our seven new graduates of the class of 2007, to gather with us right here at the school, itself, for our upcoming June 2009 alumni convention. Stay tuned.

WSSB Students Receive Awards

Congratulations to WSSB graduates Vaughn Brown and Chelsea Armstrong:

Vaughn was the 2007 recipient of the Board of Trustees Award. This award is given to a senior student who has shown outstanding success in academics or overcoming obstacles in their life and being able to complete their education with the capability of being a successful citizen in the community.

Chelsea was the 2007 recipient of the Roy J. Brothers Award. This award is annually given to a student at the school who has shown outstanding progress in some area of their life. The award can be given for academics, citizenship, helpfulness, vocational success, or any other area which the Board and the staff deem appropriate.

**Identification of Statewide Services and Best Educational Practices for
Washington State Students Who are Blind, Visually Impaired, and with Multiple Disabilities:
A Study of the Washington State School for the Blind and Related Statewide Services—
Executive Summary**

Robert J. Beadles, Jr., PhD, CRC
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This study (sponsored by the Schuman Trust, a non-profit organization benefiting blind and visually impaired individuals) is an evaluation of statewide services for students who are blind, visually impaired, and multiply disabled in the state of Washington. Concerned citizens with visual impairments in the state of Washington contacted VI RehaB Consulting to provide national and statewide research of services following the 2006 Washington State Public Policy Institute (WSPPI) study that evaluated both the Washington State School for the Blind and the Washington State School for the Deaf.

There is no true comparison between the educational programming differences of specialized schools for the blind and public schools. Given the lack of sufficient numbers of qualified personnel to serve and teach children who are deaf or blind, a specialized school placement provides a viable educational and cost-effective choice for parents. It is imperative that early identification and intervention should be expanded to ensure that all infants and toddlers qualifying for blind and visually impaired services across the state are identified.

The continuum of placement options should be considered the best practice for students who are blind or visually impaired. In some areas of the state, services for students who are blind or visually impaired are limited or non-existent. This may be due to various factors which include a shortage of qualified vision professionals, the need of the student to receive more intensive training (such as reading braille), or because a student's home is in a remote region of the state.

Regardless of placement, educational programs for students should be provided by qualified vision professionals and teachers. Best practices are sometimes difficult to measure, but successful outcomes (such as school completion or employment) are a good measure of overall best educational practices.

The WSIPP study (2006) proposed two policy options from its study of the Washington State School for the Deaf and the Washington State School for the Blind.

- 1). Maintain the schools' instructional, residential, and outreach programs while considering capital funding requests and changes in governance structure***
- 2). Scale back school operations with partial or full closure of one or both schools.***

A third option should be strongly considered that was not presented by the WSIPP Report would be:

- 3). Maintain the current school's instructional, residential, and outreach programs, increase funding to support the hiring of additional outreach personnel to work with the more rural ESDs, and maintain the existing governing structure.***

This option, not presented as an alternative under the 2006 WSIPP study, seems to be the most logical in terms of providing specialized services for a low-incidence population. It is also more cost effective to support and develop further educational programs to serve those unidentified students who appear on the APH Federal Quota Count, but do not appear in the State Child Count. The WSIPP statement from their recommendations states that *"the full extent of the impacts on local schools and individual students is unknown"* (WSIPP, 2006, p. 6).

**Identification of Statewide Services and Best Educational Practices for
Washington State Students Who are Blind, Visually Impaired, and with Multiple Disabilities:
A Study of the Washington State School for the Blind and Related Statewide Services—
Executive Summary (continued)**

Mann (2006) in the WSIPP literature review cites that collaboration between local schools and specialized schools is increasing, leading to a more seamless set of services available for students who are blind or visually impaired. As these two educational settings work together, there has been an increase in 1) transferring between the settings, 2) expanding the educational practice of short-term placements to work identified student needs, and 3) more mainstreaming efforts between public and specialized schools for academic students.

Also, Washington Sensory Disability Service only has one vision professional out of a staff of 17 working on vision-related services. Fiscal governmental responsibility should examine the need for the vision component of WSDS and move that position to WSSB. It also does not appear to be fiscally-sound management practices to have a state program (the IRCB) located at WSSB and associated by proximity and personnel supervision administered by another program in the middle of the state with only one employee. By appearances using overhead monies as a flow-through agency to support an almost non-existent program at WSDS reduces the amount of monies that should be provided directly to the IRCB and it also reduces the amount of monies that could be used for direct media services for students who are blind or visually impaired.

If the issue is primarily about cost, then the state must be prepared to have the ESDs shoulder the burden of finding and hiring highly qualified staff. If public school were the only option available, then the students would not be able to receive additional expanded core curriculum studies that focus on social skills, activities of daily living, and orientation and mobility skills because of the core content expectations within the classroom. Expanded core curriculum means time added on to the school day to focus on these important life skills. Thus, the full-continuum of placement options would not exist for children who are blind or visually impaired.

Examining other issues about the cost of education for low incidence groups, the WSIPP study stated that *“Potential expenditure savings could be offset by requests from the local districts for supplemental funding if students require exceptionally cost-intensive services or an out-of-state residential placement”* (WSIPP, 2006, p .6). In their own words, the possibility of expenditure savings could in essence cost more. Add on to this the possibility that the student might have to attend school completely out of state which could pose a major imposition on any family.

Given all these variables, specialized schools for the blind serve a small segment of the public school population of students who are visually impaired. These students need a variety of specialized educational options and a residential placement is one of the options that should continue to be available. Providing adequate numbers of qualified vision professionals in all public school settings will not occur unless more federal and state funds are provided to higher education programs who are graduating individuals trained to teach and work with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

The Washington State School for the Blind is one of the leaders in the education of children and students who are blind and visually impaired. The opportunity to expand services through regional programming and the use of the distance learning and digital portal teaching model will further enhance the full-spectrum of positive educational outcomes for students who are blind or visually impaired.

The various findings provide foundation for a list of recommendations that are intended to help the state move in a positive direction for students who are blind or visually impaired. There are several factors that need to be con-

**Identification of Statewide Services and Best Educational Practices for
Washington State Students Who are Blind, Visually Impaired, and with Multiple Disabilities:
A Study of the Washington State School for the Blind and Related Statewide Services—
Executive Summary (continued)**

sidered and should be implemented to improve and expand services for parents and families of infants, toddlers, and students who are blind, visually impaired, or multiply disabled.

- ◇ Early identification and intervention should be evaluated and aligned to provide a seamless set of services as they move from a medical service delivery model into an educational program that includes all infants and toddlers qualifying for vision-related services across the state.
- ◇ A stronger commitment towards strengthening family involvement is needed, including family-oriented services such as parental education and counseling throughout the child's education.
- ◇ In order to have effective early intervention programs, increased family involvement, and viable services for children who are blind or visually impaired, early and appropriate services must be brought closer to where these children reside through either regional centers or via cooperative agreements with related educational entities.
- ◇ The roles of WSSB as statewide resources need to be more clearly defined and include proactive responsibilities such as tracking all students who are blind or visually impaired in the state and assisting the Office of State Public Instruction in meeting their needs.
- ◇ WSDS needs to develop clearer philosophies of service and purpose for the blind or solely focus on deafness-related issues. It is thought that because of the minimal services currently provided by WSDS through the vision component either be eliminated and moved under the supervision of the WSSB.
- ◇ More needs to be done to retrain current vision professionals in the state and to focus on recruiting individuals to train and educate them as O&Ms or TVIs so that they can help reduce personnel shortages. Using the medical nursing model of "growing your own" and providing financial or educational opportunities to meet shortage needs might need to be considered. This is especially important in rural areas of Washington where finding or maintaining itinerant personnel are the greatest.
- ◇ Increased funding and hiring assistive technology staff throughout the state so that students who are blind and visually impaired can be held to the same academic standards as other Washington students. This also includes reducing the visual bias and visual limitations posed by high stakes testing such as the WASL.
- ◇ Students who are blind or visually impaired have additional learning needs. This can be accomplished through focusing on the National Agenda, which focuses on the expanded-core curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired, and the extended-academic year.

In closing, the data presented in this study is consistent with other specialized schools for the blind in the United States. Every state's school for the blind program varies in degree and scope of services provided to infants, students, and family members. Specialized schools also vary in funding sources and the diversity of the student population served. In addition, specialized schools for the blind and visually impaired in the United States vary in their interaction and role in the public education of students with disabilities. The role of the specialized school should be as an educational entity and resource to students, parents, family members, the general public, and public and private school special educators and teachers.

For more information, contact Sue Ammeter at (360) 437-7916 or sue.ammeter@cablespeed.com.

STATEWIDE MESSAGE BOARD FOR PARENTS

By Jean Marie Curtis, Parent Representative

WSSB has a great tool for the parents/families of any blind/visually impaired child throughout the entire state. It is called the "parent listserv (**Message Board**)."

This tool allows parents/families to talk to each other. Each parent has the opportunity to find out from other parents/families how they deal with a problem, find resources or tell their story. A parent can send an email asking a question about a problem and someone that reads it and has an answer can reply to the first person individually or to the whole listserv (**Message Board**).

Recently a parent had a question regarding her daughter and a parent with the same problem replied. It was very pleasing to see parents or family members talk, discuss and get answers. If you would like to join this listserv (**Message Board**) just follow these instructions.

1. Go to the WSSB website (www.wssb.wa.gov)
2. Look on the right hand side of the site for a list of services, etc. Under "School Information" in bold letters is a link titled "Parents/Families." Click on that link.
3. You will see four additional links. Click on "parent listserv" (this is the **Message Board**).
4. You will see a document that describes the listserv and the rules that apply to it. The third paragraph tells you how to subscribe. From your own email, open a new message and send it to parentsforum@wssb.wa.gov with "Subscribe" in the subject line.

You will receive a confirmation email from the listserv (**Message Board**). *It will give you a confirmation code to send back to the listserv.* You will need to reply to this message within 10 days or you will not be subscribed to the message board.

We can all use a tool to communicate with others like ourselves. If you have any problems subscribing or have any questions, please feel free to contact me (Jean Curtis, Parent Representative to the Board of Trustees at curtis_jean@hotmail.com or 360-601-5562.

Good luck and I hope to hear from all of you.

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Parent Representative: Jean Curtis, 4317 NE 66th Ave., C27, Vancouver, WA 98661, (360) 433-2643

Washington State School for the Blind - 2007-2008 School Year Events

September	Labor Day	September 3
	New Employee Orientation	September 4
	Ed Reform Workshop (teachers only)	September 5
	Safety Training/Fall Workshops	September 6-7
	Student Registration (no transportation)	September 9
	First Day of School	September 10
	Welcome Students Ice Cream Social	September 20 (2:30 pm)
	Board of Trustees Meeting	September 21-22
October	National White Cane Awareness Day	October 15
	Open House	October 18 (6:30-8:30 pm)
	NFB Fall Convention	October 19-21
November	Washington Council of the Blind Convention	November 1-3
	End of 1 st Quarter	November 9
	Veterans Day Holiday (observed)	November 12
	Board of Trustees Meeting	November 16-17
	Thanksgiving Holiday	November 22-23
December	Tree Decorating	December 4
	Winter Holiday Program	December 20
	Winter Holiday	Dec. 24-Jan. 4
January	Students returning by bus/air	January 6
	Board of Trustees Conference Call	January 8
	M.L. King's Birthday	January 21
	Lions Swim Meet	January 24
	PAYDAY Assembly	January 25
February	End of 2 nd Quarter/1 st Semester	February 1
	President's Day	February 18

The Lions Roar Newsletter is produced three times per year at the Washington State School for the Blind, 2214 East 13th Street, Vancouver, WA 98661-4120. Phone 360-696-6321 Fax 360-737-2120
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